

Discovery

by Shoikana

Category: Nightwing
Genre: Drama
Language: English
Status: Completed
Published: 2000-07-02 09:00:00
Updated: 2000-07-02 09:00:00
Packaged: 2016-04-27 22:00:27
Rating: K
Chapters: 1
Words: 6,704
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: Dick's friend Clancy discovers his secret.

Discovery

> <meta name="ProgId"> Discovery

"Fire!!" Clancy yelled through the eerily-lit, klaxon-filled hallway. This was the last thing she needed. It was three in the morning, and she had just gone to bed after cramming for her semester finals when the alarms had gone off. Fortunately the new building owner had just had the new alarm system installed. She had already called the fire department, but as the building superintendent, she felt some kind of responsibility for warning the tenants if by some miracle they didn't hear the alarms. Thank God she had no deaf tenants. The fire was already spreading rapidly, and she kept a mental list of the tenants she'd seen escape or doors she'd seen opened as she rushed through each floor.

She ran down the next flight of stairs listing to herself the tenants on this floor. Grayson. She hadn't seen him. Chances are he had already gotten out ahead of her, she reasoned. But as she sped by, her ears ringing from the alarms, she felt an added bolt of adrenaline when she realized Dick's door was still shut. Surely if he had escaped, he would have left his door open. And, she thought, he'd probably be doing the same thing she's doing now. Maybe he wasn't home, she tried to reassure herself. She had a little time, for the fire was still a few floors above her, and she had had the foresight to grab the master key, but of course even if the fire were on top of her and she had no access, she would have had to find a way in. She had to make sure. Especially since it was Dick.

She quickly unlocked the door, and burst into Dick's obviously bachelor-inhabited apartment yelling for him at the top of her lungs. To avoid tripping over the clothes and other objects on the floor, Clancy quickly flicked on the lightâ€"fortunately it still worked.

She saw a human-sized lump in Dick's bed and rushed over, tripping over his shoes in the process so she landed on top of him. As she caught herself, she shook Dick, trying to wake him. "Dick!!" she continued to scream, "Wake up!!" She threw off his covers and stopped cold.

Mostly straightened from throwing the covers off, Clancy looked in disbelief at what Dick was wearing. His outfit was a black bodysuit with a blue wing design—she knew that outfit. She had even seen Nightwing once. She couldn't move—she was paralyzed. She had no idea. Finally the fire alarm shoved its way back into her consciousness enough to get her to move again, and she quickly scanned the scene. His mask was on the floor by his bed, and the shoes she had tripped over were actually boots that went with the costume. He really was Nightwing! She took a rushed examination of him, and realized that he wasn't asleep; he was unconscious; and her fear reached a new level. As though a lifetime had passed, Clancy suddenly went back to full speed and started screaming for help as she tried to get the Nightwing costume off her friend. She knew she had to get the costume off.

She couldn't rip the costume—it was made from some kind of tear-resistant material, although there were holes in the arms, legs, and torso as though Dick—no Nightwing—no Dick—had been in a bad fight. Running out of time and praying that she wasn't making whatever was wrong with him worse, Clancy managed to pull the top over Dick's head. Still screaming for help, Clancy had just gotten the evidence stuffed under the bed when a firefighter came rushing into the room. "Help!" Clancy reiterated, "He's hurt! He won't wake up!"

"It's ok, miss!" the firefighter gently but urgently moved Clancy out of his way, "I've got him! Go! Get out of here!" Grateful that the tights Dick was still wearing were black with no tell-tale markings, Clancy rushed out of the room and out of the building, leaving Dick in the hands of the civil servant.

**

Clancy sat in the café housed within her school's commons with her head in her hands and her coffee teasing her nostrils. As though her life couldn't get more complicated. Now not only did she have to worry about finals—although thankfully the professor who was to administer her final today gave her an extension—but the building for which she was responsible and lived in *burned*to*the*ground.* She just found out that one of her closest friends and tenants leads a double life as Blüdhaven's most celebrated vigilante—well as celebrated as a hero can be in a city as corrupt as Blüdhaven. She still couldn't believe she'd been collecting rent from *Nightwing.* She couldn't believe *Dick* was *Nightwing.* Although, now that she knew, she saw the clues. Hindsight, and all, she thought. Dick was in the hospital intensive care unit with a severe concussion. It had been a big emergency when Dick had arrived at the ER. The doctor had told her earlier that morning that he would have died if he had been left alone for the night. Guess that's the silver lining—saving Dick's life. She had no idea how to contact Dick's family. He never talked about them—she didn't even know if he had family. Then on top of it all, she couldn't contact the building owner. Not that she knew who that was. While it was a bit odd and annoying before, the hidden identity was a big problem now because the insurance people

wanted to talk to him. And they were bothering her because they couldn't find the owner. Although a big building in the middle of Blüdhaven burning to the ground certainly should have caught his attention. And what was going to happen when she did find him? She had no idea how the fire started, and the owner might blame her; maybe even sue her. Even if he didn't sue her, he'll probably fire her, and then where will she be? Homeless and jobless and trying to manage a college education, that's where.

Ok, Clancy thought, pull yourself together, girl. Use what you know. She didn't know Dick's background, but now she could use his other identity. Everyone knew Nightwing was associated with Batman. Batman had to know who Dick's family is. And the Gotham City Police Department is always catching flack for not being able to solve crimes without the Dark Knight. So she had to go to the Gotham Police and ask for help contacting Batman. Then she had to ask Batman for help with Dick's family. And she dreaded *that* conversation.

**

Clancy thought to herself that this is got to be the weirdest thing she's ever done as she waited on the rooftop of the Gotham City Police Department building. She was here with Commissioner Gordon after convincing him that, yes, she knew the Batsignal wasn't a beeper, and, yes, she knew the Gotham police wasn't a paging service for Batman. She finally had to allude to Nightwing being hurt; she didn't want to just come out and say it since Dick had been admitted as himself, yet for all she knew, Gordon already knew that Dick was Nightwing. That allusion seemed to convince Gordon that Clancy was serious, and he finally agreed to call Batman for her.

After about ten minutes, to the point at which all that was left of Clancy was a ball of nerves, the Dark Knight himself arrived, throwing Clancy into an even worse state of disconcert. Everything Clancy had heard about him was true. He was huge; like a professional athlete; and that costume could scare the Irish out of a Leprechaun. But the worst part was his eyes. She tried not to fidget as he eyed her, as though he thought she had no right to be standing here. Finally his gaze lifted, and he addressed the commissioner, "What is it?" He sounded annoyed, Clancy contemplated, like he thought she was just some girl looking to meet Batman. Like hell, Clancy thought to herself. If it weren't for Dick, she would have jumped off the roof herself to get away.

Gordon answered, "Ms. Clancy here claims to have information for you, but insisted on delivering it herself." Oh, great, Clancy thought, he's going to leave it all to me. But that's what she asked for.

Batman looked at her expectantly, and she consciously tried not to cower when she insisted in a cracked voice, "I've got to ask you something." She glanced at Gordon, "In private." As heard herself say her words, she chided herself, for it sounded to her as though she was some teeny-bopper fan about to ask him if he has a girlfriend.

The Dark Knight looked at the commissioner with a slight nod, which Gordon returned. As Gordon turned to leave, Clancy realized what she had asked, and almost changed her mind, begging the commissioner to stay. She didn't want to be alone with this nut! But before she could

lodge her protest, Clancy remembered why she was here, and told herself that she had to do this for Dick. Besides, if Dick associated himself with this man, he can't be that bad, right? Somehow that thought didn't alleviate her fears.

Soon she was alone with the vigilante, and Batman asked her, "What can I do for you, Ms. Clancy?" It almost seemed to Clancy that he was trying to be amiable.

"Um," Clancy started slowly, looking at her feet, "I've got something to tell you, and you're not going to like it." She looked up cautiously to see his hardened expression. Unable to keep eye contact, she continued, "I accidentally found out something last night. See, there was a fire in my buildingâ€”I'm the superintendentâ€”and.. um.. Dick Grayson is one of my tenantsâ€”" She looked up again to see if he got a hint of where she was going. He did. She started to babble, "I'm sorry! It was an accident! I was rushing though, making sure everyone was out, and his door was closed! I went in, saw him in bed, and when I couldn't wake him, I threw off the covers! I'm sorry! I didn't mean it!" She took a breath and added, "I got the top of the costume off though before the firefighters came in." She hoped that last part would help to alleviate Batman's anger.

Surprisingly, Clancy thought the Dark Knight seemed to take the news well. His expression was still hardened, but she wasn't sure that wasn't a permanent fixture. He surprised her when, of all the things she had just babbled, he pulled out, "What do you mean, you couldn't wake him?"

Clancy gulped, "Turns out he has a severe concussion. The doctors said today if the fire hadn't happened and he was left alone for the night, that he might have died. He's in the hospital, but I don't know anything about his family. I don't know who to contact. I was hoping.." she trailed off, hoping that Batman would understand her request without her actually having to ask it.

"You were hoping I could tell you who to contact." His tone made her request sound unreasonable, but continued, "I will contact the appropriate people. Thank you, Ms. Clancy, for informing me."

As Batman turned to leave, Clancy spoke up, "Um, could you tell them that he's listed in serious condition, and the doctors say as long as he wakes up he'll be ok?" Batman contemplated Clancy for a moment, causing Clancy to wonder what was going through the Dark Knight's mind, and then gave a curt nod as he left the rooftop.

**

"Hey, how was your final?" Tim asked in a soft voice as Clancy entered Dick's small intensive care unit. He was relaxed in his chair as though he had been there for a while. They had met a few days ago here, and Clancy had gushed to him all of her problems in a fit of despair. He was a nice kid; Clancy liked him; and that was besides his listening to her problems. Clancy had asked him if he was Dick's brother, and he had said no, but that he was like a brother to Dick, and the closest thing Dick had to a sibling. He was the only person Clancy had met while visiting Dick, and he had been as tight-lipped as Dick had always been. Or maybe it was just that Clancy wasn't asking questions. She realized that she had started to wonder

fearfully just what kind of world Dick was from.

"Not bad," Clancy answered, "I think I even did ok. How is he?" She looked at Dick. He looked peaceful, she thought, but somehow far away. There were monitors displaying his vitals, but he required no life support past the standard IV.

"Doc said he's doing better," Tim answered while Clancy took a seat by the foot of Dick's bed on the same side as Tim. Clancy had so many questions, but she didn't even know if Tim knew Dick's secret. She didn't want to give anything away that she shouldn't. Tim studied her expression of puzzlement and concentration for a moment as she tried to figure out a good question to ask. Finally Tim broke the awkward silence and asked, "You're trying to figure out how to find out if I know Dick's secret, aren't you?" Clancy's mixed reaction of surprise and relief created a comic expression, and Tim burst out in a muted laugh. "Obviously I do," Tim grinned, then explained, "Batman told me that you discovered his dual id."

"Do you do this often?" Clancy asked with an edge to her voice.

Noticing her almost antagonistic tone, Tim asked, puzzled, "What do you mean?"

"Sit here in a hospital room waiting to see if he's going to be ok. I would think with what he does, he gets really hurt a lot." Clancy's disapproval was clear.

Tim sighed, and tried to explain, "It's a choice he's made. I'm aware, along with everyone else who knows he's Nightwing, of the dangers and we have to accept them as part of him. Now that you know, you're going to have to accept it too if you want to continue to be in his world. That's just one of the reasons he tries to keep what he does secret." Tim paused, "You gotta know though, that Nightwing and Batman are the absolute best at what they do. Nothing less is acceptable for either one. And Dick is a master detective.."

"Dick?! He always seems so clueless." Clancy interrupted.

Tim let out a little laugh, "Well, yes, I know what you mean. Sometimes it seems he's lacking in common sense, but, at the risk of getting kicked out of my gender, I think it's just a guy thing." Clancy laughed. "Seriously, though, he's one of the best in the world, second maybe only to Batman, and even then it's a close second. I think sometimes he overcompensates to hide his ability. But now that you know his dual id, if you ever need help, Dick can solve any puzzle, and would be more than happy to help now that he doesn't have to hide what he can do from you." Clancy shook her head; just when you thought you knew a guy.. "He always wants to help. Especially his friends."

"Good, maybe he can help me find how the fire started," Clancy muttered.

"He'd have no problem figuring that out. Textbook for him." Tim said.

"Think he could help me find this mysterious owner?" Clancy asked hopefully.

Trying to keep a straight face; he thought he was succeeding; Tim answered, "Uh, yeah, I'm sure he could do that too."

Tim could see suspicion forming on Clancy's face, and he quickly changed the subject, "As for if he gets hurt often, he's had injuries, but only a couple have been really life-threatening. When it comes down to it, he's willing to give his life in exchange for the good he's able to do. We all have to accept that."

Clancy nodded thoughtfully. She was really starting to wish she had never found out about Dick's double life, although knowing Dick's deepest secret had its appeal—she just hoped that in fact Dick's dual id *is* his deepest secret. She had been perfectly happy thinking he was a normal man who had just graduated from the police academy, and with whom she could dream of having a relationship. Her thoughts prompted her to ask bluntly, "Who *is* Dick?"

"How do you mean?" Tim asked, puzzled.

"Well I thought I knew him, but now I learn this, and he just refuses to talk about his past or his family. I can't imagine that the person I thought Dick was would ever get involved with someone like Batman." Clancy felt overwhelmed as she looked at her unconscious friend.

"You do know him." Tim said matter-of-factly. "He cares for you Clancy. He considers you a good friend. And out of costume, Batman isn't really so bad. It was more chance of fate that brought them together. I can't really say any more." Tim paused, "But Dick is himself with you. I know he is, because he's mentioned you to me. And he's always true and honest with his friends as much as he can be." Clancy nodded thoughtfully.

Clancy asked, "How did you learn his secret? If you're not brothers, how did you meet?"

"I'm his neighbor," Tim revealed. "Dick grew up in a circus until his parents were killed.." Tim was interrupted by Clancy's gasp, but then continued, "His family; including him; was a trapeze act, and he was the only one in the world able to do a quadruple somersault. As a kid I knew that, and when I saw Robin—Dick had been Robin before he was Nightwing.." That caused Clancy to hold her head in her hands in disbelief, and Tim grinned knowingly. He continued, "When I saw Robin do the same move, I knew Dick was Robin. I probably never would have revealed that I knew, except that I needed help with something, and I went to Dick for help. This was before I knew him, and I didn't get his attention until I called him Nightwing." Tim grinned. "Later my family happened to move in next to Dick."

Clancy pondered a moment, and then, going on a hunch that she's had since soon after meeting Tim, asked, "That wasn't a coincidence, was it? Your family moving in next to Dick." Tim looked puzzled, and it was clear he wasn't going to offer any information. But Clancy had to know, even if it meant looking like a fool. "I don't quite know how to ask this," she started, "so I'm just going to ask. Are you the current Robin?"

Tim's first expression was as though he had been struck, and then was replaced by resignation, and he nodded. "We've always thought that if

you figure out one of us you've got us all. I think that's a main reason Dick has been so tight-lipped about his family. In case you or someone else ever did find out his secret. But yeah. Soon after that day I went to Dick for help, revealing to him that I knew his identity, I got the nod to become Robin, not that I particularly wanted it. But you don't say no to Batman."

Clancy let out a little laugh in understanding, and then a thought struck her, and she said almost comically, "I hope that doesn't mean I have to become the next Batgirl!"

Tim laughed, glad to ease the tension he was starting to feel, and answered, "Nope. All we ask is that you keep the secret safe."

"That I can do," Clancy said definitively.

Tim looked at Dick, wondering if he should tell Clancy the rest of Dick's history. She deserved to know, he thought, yet the cardinal rule of being a Bat-family member was to protect Batman's identity above all. Tim knew that if he told Clancy about Dick's relation to Bruce, she would quickly deduce that identity. But, he argued, she would find out eventually, and it was better to give her the information in a controlled environment, so he asked, "You've never lived in Gotham, have you?" Clancy shook her head no. "I'm guessing that another reason Dick's never mentioned his current family is because he wanted to make sure you knew and liked him for himself. If you had lived in Gotham, you'd know his name. He's had to live in the spotlight role of Gotham's adopted prince since he was a kid. After his parents were killed, he became Bruce Wayne's ward" Tim wanted to continue, but was caught by Clancy's bug-eyed expression.

"Bruce Wayne?! As in Wayne Enterprises?! No wonder he suggested I apply for that scholarship!!" Clancy exclaimed. She wasn't sure how to feel about the revelation.

"See? That's what I mean. So many people in Gotham know him first as Bruce Wayne's ward. I'm sure he wants his own name back. He would have suggested that you apply for the scholarship even if he didn't know Bruce at all. And if what Dick tells me about you is true, you got that scholarship without any help from him." Tim watched as Clancy blushed, and then Clancy's eyes went wide, and he knew she had made the expected deduction. She looked questioningly at Tim, afraid to ask out loud, and he confirmed with a resigned nod, glad that he didn't have to speak the confirmation. Tim could see that Clancy was still terribly worried about something, and asked, "What's wrong?"

Clancy shrugged, "I guess just learning all this stuff. It's all a bit overwhelming. It's not every day you learn that one of your good friends could be killed easily on any given night." She paused, "Actually I guess I'm still worried about having a place to live and a job when I finally do find the owner."

Trying to do so nonchalantly, Tim shrugged, and said, "I wouldn't worry too much about it. I'm sure the building will be rebuilt, and I'm pretty sure the owner won't blame you."

Clancy said suspiciously, "You sound like you know something. Wait.." Clancy's suspicion grew as she said, "You're not going to tell me Wayne owns the building.."

"Nope," Tim said, and then jabbed a thumb at his unconscious 'brother.'

"Dick?! You're kidding me!!" Clancy said in disbelief, "He owns the building?! I guess he can find the owner!! Why.. how.. why didn't he say anything?"

"Same reason I said before. He didn't want anyone to know he was well-off. He just wants to fit in and do good. He thinks he can do the most good in Blüdhaven. That's why he lives where he does. And he didn't want everyone in the building to lose their apartments. So he bought the building. So I'm suspecting your job is safe," Tim grinned.

"So Bruce Wayne still supports him? Dick always seemed so independent."

"No. I don't think Dick would take the money if Bruce offered it. Not that Bruce wouldn't if he thought Dick needed it. Right after Dick's parents were killed, the other performers of the circus set up a trust fund for Dick. It's come to terms, giving Dick a sizable fortune. Not nearly as much as Bruce, but certainly comfortable. He owns that circus now too, by the way. But Dick's never liked the socialite group he was forced to grow up with, so he doesn't like to make it known that he has money." Tim considered his next words and continued thoughtfully, "I think although Dick and Bruce love each other like father and son, Dick has always considered himself a Romany boy from the circus. Even after all his years in Gotham, he's much more comfortable with his background before he met Bruce than afterwards."

"Romany?" Clancy questioned. She wasn't familiar with that nationality.

"Gypsy," Tim grinned, "Whenever Batman tries to learn something from Dick and doesn't pick it up right away, Dick insists that it's because Batman has no Romany blood. He's quite proud of his heritage."

"Funny, for someone's who so proud of his heritage, he doesn't talk about it much." Clancy commented dryly. "So Dick's a gypsy, huh? Explains some things." Clancy said with a hint of teasing.

Suddenly the pair heard a weak protest, "Heyy, watch it." Surprised, Tim and Clancy looked quickly at Dick, and realized that he was regaining consciousness. As the pair jumped up to greet the injured hero, with Clancy going to the other side of the bed, Dick continued weakly, "Don't you know talking bad about the Romany will get you cursed?"

"Dick! Thank God!" Clancy exclaimed, causing a pained look in the hero.

"Could you keep it down?" He requested softly, "I have one hell of a headache."

As Clancy apologized, Tim laid a hand on his surrogate brother's shoulder. "Glad to see you awake, Dick. Um.. there are some things to tell you," he understated. Dick's response was to close his eyes, and

Tim said quickly, "It can wait. Stay awake, ok, Dick? You have a concussion." Tim knew Dick would understand the importance of staying awake with a concussion. Dick nodded his head, and after a moment opened his eyes again.

"How long?" Dick started, asking mostly in an attempt to stay conscious.

"Couple of days," Tim answered as Clancy looked on, concerned.

"How.. What happened?" Dick continued softly.

"Actually, we don't know," Tim admitted. "Clancy found you in the middle of the night unconscious in your bed." At Dick's furrowing brow, Tim said, "For now, don't ask." Dick nodded resignedly. "She got you to the hospital." Tim paused, "Dick, she knows.."

**

Clancy sat in the school caf   contemplating the past few weeks' events. It's certainly been a whirlwind tour, she thought. She was sitting at her favorite table in the corner with a cold chai for herself and for her expected companion. While normally the caf   would be packed, most students had gone home for the summer, leaving her alone with her thoughts. She sat with her back to the room because she had always known that her friend liked to have his back to the wall, but only recently she had a much better idea why. She was jarred from her thoughts as she felt a hand on her shoulder, and turned to find Dick standing over her wearing a big smile. "Dick!" she exclaimed happily, "I'm glad you could make it!"

"Of course," Dick smiled his melting smile, causing Clancy to feel its effects, "I wouldn't stand up my rescuer." Dick took a seat and a sip of the drink waiting for him as Clancy blushed. "How'd you do for the semester?" Dick asked.

"All A's and one B," Clancy revealed proudly.

"Great!" Dick encouraged. "I told you you'd do well!"

"Dick," Clancy started, "Thanks for that scholarship. I could never do this without it."

Dick shook his head, "Wasn't me, Clanc. All you. I didn't mention your name at all. Although I do admit if it looked like you weren't going to get it, I probably would have. But I didn't have to." Clancy smiled bashfully. "I should be thanking you for making sure I was ok. Tim told me how bad off I was when you found me that night."

"Yeah, that actually made me glad for the fire. I'm just glad you're ok." Clancy said. Dick nodded. "How did you get such a nasty concussion, anyway?"

Dick answered, "Last thing I remember is an explosion that knocked me back pretty hard. I guess that's where I got it. I don't remember anything afterwards, but obviously I managed to get home."

Clancy nodded. "I'm sorry about finding out about.. you know.."
Clancy trailed off.

"It's ok. If it's between keeping my secret and keeping my life, I think I'd choose my life," Dick said, taking a taste of his drink. Clancy smiled. "It's going to be dangerous for you though." At Clancy's concerned look, Dick quickly amended, "I mean, you've got to make sure you don't slip talking about me or Nightwing. If anyone mentions Nightwing, you've gotta pretend you don't know me." Clancy nodded with understanding.

Clancy thought a moment, trying to word her next question, and then asked, "What was it like growing up with.. him." She was afraid to say the name.

Dick shrugged, "Extraordinary, I think. I can't really say, because I don't have anything to compare it against, but I know I didn't have a normal upbringing." Clancy gave a give-me-a-break look, and Dick laughed. "Uh, yeah, I guess that's an understatement," he grinned. "I've always had my acrobatics. I can't imagine *not* being able to flip in the air without thinking. And I always had discipline. In the circus, and with Bruce, although they were different kinds of discipline. Lots of times I've wished for a more 'normal' childhood, but I think I'm better for the kind of history I have."

Clancy nodded. She was still trying to comprehend all that she had learned about her friend. She shook her head as she said, "When I was a kid, if anyone ever told me I'd know Robin, I would have laughed in their face." Dick laughed. A thought crossed Clancy's face, and as though the thought had just occurred to her for the first time, she said, "Hey, you're a Titan, aren't you!?"

Dick smiled, "Yep. Even the leader, although sometimes they seem like they don't want a leader. They're some of my best friends in the world. The other original members are like brothers and sisters to me. Actually, I'm the only one with a secret identity of the original team, so maybe someday you can meet them."

"Wow, that'd be great," Clancy said, starting to feel a little hero worship. It was almost like knowing a rock star, she thought. Except being a rock star doesn't normally get one almost killed.

"Arsenal.. you know who I mean?" Dick interrupted himself.

Clancy nodded, "Yeah, the red-head archer, right?"

Dick confirmed with a nod, and said, "He's got a three-year-old who's just the sweetest little girl, and he's always looking for a babysitter, so maybe if you don't mind, you could make a little extra money that way. I'm told he pays well, especially if the babysitter's cute." Dick grinned.

Clancy laughed and, with a mischievous tone, asked, "So you think he'll pay me well?"

"Highest he can afford," Dick flirted, causing Clancy to blush and hide behind her drink by taking a sip.

They were getting a little too close to where Clancy wanted to be with Dick and knew she couldn't, so, with a forced lightness, she changed the subject, "So what'd you find out, boss?"

Noting Clancy's discomfort, and knowing why, Dick tried to be tactful when he said, "Don't call me that, Clanc. I don't want you to think of me like that." Clancy nodded and looked into her drink, her discomfort still present. Noting his friend's continued unease, Dick lightened his voice to a more conversational tone, "I went to the site," Clancy looked up, anxious to get rid of her discomfort, and found herself wondering if he went as himself or Nightwing, "and found evidence of a bomb. Do you remember any kind of explosion before the fire alarms went off?"

Clancy shook her head, "No, I don't think so, but I think I was already asleep. I could have been woken by an explosion and just figured it was the alarms. Can't really say." Clancy's eyes went wide, "You think someone set off a bomb in the building? Why??"

Dick answered, "Ya know Kim on the top floor? The one whose ex-husband kept stalking her?" Clancy nodded sadly. Kim and her kids were the only casualties of the fire. "Her husband bought some plastique a week before the fire."

"So you think he did it?" Clancy asked.

"I know he did. He ..confessed. He's in custody now."

"Who did he confess to?" Clancy asked in a mock curious tone.

Dick gave her a give-me-a-break look and Clancy grinned. "So Tim was telling the truth. You are a master detective." Now it was Dick's turn to blush and he shrugged self-consciously. For someone who's so good, Clancy thought, he's awfully modest. It just made his turning her down for a real relationship even more painful. She continued mournfully, "Well that explains why of all the people in the building, only Kim and her kids didn't make it. Why would anyone do that? I'm mean, ok, so you don't get along with your ex, but to blow her up?? And those were his kids!"

Dick shook his head, "I don't know, Clanc, but I've seen a lot worse. But it's thinking like that exactly that has me compelled to keep doing what I'm doing. If I can save one kid from a premature death, especially at the hands of someone who's supposed to love him, I'm going to keep risking my life." Dick paused, "Between the time of when my parents were killed and when Bruce got custody of me, I was placed in a juvenile hall because there was no room for me in foster care. The memory of a lot of the kids there stick with me too. I was lucky. A lot of kids aren't."

Clancy nodded absentmindedly. She had no idea that her friend had such a morbid past. It was no wonder he didn't want to talk about it. Looking to change the subject to something lighter, Dick continued, "The insurance company is paying for the building to be rebuilt."

Pulled out of her thoughts, Clancy asked, surprised, "Really?? How'd you pull that off?"

"I have.. connections," Dick alluded.

"Yeah, I've heard," Clancy said sarcastically.

Dick sighed, "Come on, Clancy. This is why I didn't tell you in the

first place. I'm the same guy you knew before you knew I had money. Can't you forget about the money?"

"Not really, Dick. I'll try, but I won't be so hesitant about asking you for a loan anymore," Clancy grinned. Dick laughed. "So you drive around in that junk heap for fun?"

Dick laughed again. His car was notorious. "It's only on the outside," Dick grinned. "Sometime I'll show you what it can really do. Also I've talked to Bruce. He owns one or two buildings in Blådhaven, and he agreed to provide furnished apartments to everyone at our current rent while our building gets rebuilt."

"Really?! Wow!! How can he do that? *Why* would he do that? It's not like he'd be making money off it."

"Bruce can accomplish a lot. I've seen him do a lot more, and least of which was taking me in. He certainly didn't have to do that either. I think he's doing it partially to help me out, but he's a philanthropist." Dick shrugged. "That's what he does. He knows that a lot of people in our building can't afford to find temporary housing. And he and I have set up a fund for the residents. I know a lot of tenants won't take help, but we're hoping at least some will let us help them replace some of the things that were lost in the fire."

"Wow, Dick, I don't know what to say. That's really incredible," Clancy gushed.

Dick shrugged and answered, "Not everyone who has money is blind to those that don't. My parents showed me from the beginning that happiness doesn't come from money—we were generally very happy, but you don't get rich working for a circus. Bruce is the opposite—he's always had money, but he's never been happy." Dick shrugged again, and continued, "Money's no good if you can't use it to help people. Bruce has always believed that too. The only happiness he gets is from helping others. Both with money and as.. you know.." Even with the empty café, Dick was uncomfortable speaking Bruce's secret out loud.

"Yeah, I guess it is the costume," Clancy said dryly, causing Dick to laugh again.

"Actually, if he's being himself, he can be pretty formidable even without the costume. He has trouble showing it, both in and out of costume, but he cares—he really does. The only reason he makes it known that he helps people is because that's what's expected of him. He'd much rather be anonymous. Fortunately people don't know I have money too, so I can afford anonymity. And I want to keep it," Dick stressed, "I still don't want the tenants to know I'm the owner, ok? Tell them that it's Bruce, or someone else, but I still don't want people to know I have money."

Clancy nodded, "Ok. I think I liked it better when I didn't know any of this. When I didn't know that you put your life at risk every night."

"I completely understand, Clanc, but you do know. You've entered a whole world that few people rarely get to see."

"Somehow, that doesn't help. But It's something I can handle," Clancy confirmed.

"Welcome to my world," Dick grinned. Clancy rolled her eyes.

End
file.